



January 21, 2009

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Royce Hanson, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Re: Written Testimony from the City of Rockville
Public Draft of the White Flint Sector Plan

Dear Chairman Hanson:

As the Montgomery County Planning Board is beginning its process of reviewing the staff Draft of the White Flint Sector Plan, this letter serves as the City of Rockville's Written Testimony regarding the Draft.

First, I would like to express Rockville's appreciation of your staff's having come to brief the Mayor and Council on the evening of December 15th. The briefing was done by Rollin Stanley, N'kosi Yearwood and Dan Hardy. We found it to be extremely informative. We appreciated their taking the time to be with us.

In general, Rockville supports the County's broad growth strategy, in which growth is directed toward redevelopment areas as opposed to previously undeveloped locations. The White Flint sector is clearly one of the locations where growth should be directed, and there is significant opportunity in this sector for infill development, improved urban design, and an improved environment for pedestrians and transit users. These broad principles have been guiding Rockville's approach to our Town Center and to our current ongoing process to position Rockville Pike as a great place in the future.

Rockville's comments will focus on areas that have the potential for impact on Rockville, rather than on the entire document. As such, this testimony will address the importance to Rockville of Rockville Pike, itself, and on the potential impacts on schools and traffic.

1) Rockville Pike

The City of Rockville is working with a consultant team to plan the conversion of the City's portion of Rockville Pike into a whole new experience. We have entitled our process *Rockville's Pike: Envision a Great Place*, because our goals are high: to make the Pike what people consider to be a wonderful place and to where they enjoy coming and spending time.

The emerging vision is to convert the Pike into a grand boulevard, in the tradition of the great City streets of the world. The goals that we hope to

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Attach C

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achieve are to improve the pedestrian environment, protect and enhance the retail environment, improve the experience of living on the Pike, improve the functioning of transit, and make the Pike green.

A key emerging strategy for achieving these goals is to separate the through-traffic from the local traffic on both sides of the Pike. We would maintain the existing three lanes on each side of the road for through-traffic, and add two lanes on each side for a local access road that would also carry bus and bicycle traffic. Building fronts would be brought up to the sidewalk next to the access roads, and those sidewalks would be greatly improved for pedestrians, transit and outdoor seating.

We strongly encourage the Planning Board to include, in the White Flint Sector plan, a street section for the Pike that is as similar as possible to the section that the City is embracing. The whole region will benefit greatly if the City and County can work together with the State to create a grand boulevard on Rockville Pike.

We also strongly request that the Planning Board embrace this vision for the section of Rockville Pike that is north of the new Montrose Parkway, but south of the City's southern boundary. This portion of the Pike is not in the current White Flint Sector plan update, but is particularly important to Rockville because of its adjacency. Rockville believes that there are no obstacles to making the street section for this part of the Pike equivalent to that which is envisioned in our plan.

As a final point with respect to Rockville Pike, the City requests that Rockville be included in the proposed Rockville Pike Boulevard Feasibility Study, where the Draft indicates that coordination with State Highway Administration (SHA) and Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is a pre-requisite to approving development. We believe that the County and the City will have a higher likelihood of success in discussions with SHA/MCDOT if we are negotiating and planning together.

2) Impacts of the Proposed Intensity of Development

Other concerns of the City of Rockville relate to the intensity of the development that the draft anticipates and promotes, and whether there is adequate planning for the impacts of that level of intensity. As you know, Rockville is immediately to the north of the White Flint Sector planning area and will be directly affected.

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The Draft's calculations project that, at build-out, the number of residential units will more than triple, from the existing 4,479 residential units to more than 14,000. Nonresidential square footage, which already has quite a large base (and includes White Flint Mall), is anticipated to increase by more than 75%.

Even without new development, the transportation network and Walter Johnson school cluster, which includes a portion of the City of Rockville, are already strained to their limits.

Schools

The Draft recognizes that the 9,800 anticipated new residential units "will generate new students at each level, but primarily at the elementary school level." The Draft recommends that a new elementary school will be needed, but that additional students can be accommodated in the existing middle and high school. We appreciate the discussion in the Draft regarding the location of a new elementary school because we believe that this is a crucial issue for the entire plan.

The City's fundamental request is that approval of such a significantly increased level of residential units be contingent on solving the issue of locating new elementary school capacity within the Walter Johnson cluster. Elementary schools throughout the cluster are operating with portable classrooms and need significant construction projects to accommodate existing student populations. Farmland Elementary School, which serves Rockville residents, is a prime example within this cluster.

The City also requests to see the estimated number of students for each level. In particular, the City would like to understand how the conclusion was reached that the additional students resulting from the new development could be accommodated in Tilden Middle School and Walter Johnson High School.

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Traffic

As you know, the traffic in and near this sector is among the worst in all of Montgomery County. Traffic counts that have been conducted as part of the City's Rockville Pike planning process have already shown some intersections in the portions of the City's study area nearest to the White Flint Sector to be failing at certain peak times and on Saturdays. The City is very concerned that the proposed new residential and non-residential development in the White Flint Sector will result in a dramatic increase in congestion.

The Draft proposes new transportation infrastructure to accommodate both anticipated increased vehicular traffic and increased numbers of transit riders, pedestrians and cyclists. Examples include the proposed MARC Station and the proposed additional street network within the White Flint study area. Nonetheless, some of the traffic scenarios that were in the MNCPPC Transportation Planning study "Estimated Land Use and Trip Generation for Selected Alternative Scenarios" showed peak hour AM and PM vehicular trips to more than double as compared to existing conditions.

The City's core questions are: what is the future Level of Service, or Congestion Level, anticipated along major corridors within and on the corridors/portals accessing the White Flint Sector? What are the anticipated impacts of this development on these corridors, and what is proposed to address these impacts? Such corridors include:

- a) Rockville Pike,
- b) Old Georgetown Road,
- c) Executive Boulevard,
- d) Montrose Parkway,
- e) Randolph and Nicholson Lane.

We request that, before the Planning Board approve a greatly increased level of development in the sector, a thorough transportation impact evaluation be done in coordination with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation, the State Highway Administration and the City of Rockville, and policies be established on such issues as critical lane volume standards and periodic assessments of traffic issues as development projects come on line. We would not want this new level of development to create unmanageable traffic for residents in and visitors to areas near the White Flint Sector, including Rockville.

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As a final overall point, the City of Rockville requests that implementation steps of the Plan, if approved, be coordinated between the County and the City. Examples would include exploring whether there are opportunities for joint policies that will ensure compatible development throughout the length of the MD 355 corridor; and final decisions on the amount and type of public facilities, such as community centers, that would be built in support of the development of the White Flint sector.

Thank you very much for your attention to this testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan R. Hoffmann", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Susan R. Hoffmann, Mayor
City of Rockville

Cc: Councilmember John Britton
Councilmember Piotr Gajewski
Councilmember Phyllis Marcuccio
Councilmember Anne M. Robbins
Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett
Montgomery County Councilmembers
Jerry Weast, Superintendent, MCPS
Shirley Brandman, President, Board of Education
Rollin Stanley, Director of Planning, MNCPP
Bruce Crispell, Director of Long Range Planning, MNCPP
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Dan Hardy, MNCPP
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Scott Ullery, City Manager
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